

**What is claimed is:**

1. A method for authenticating a business partner in response to a request of a user comprising:

(a) providing an identity of said business partner;

(b) matching said identity of said business partner to a business that is one of a plurality of businesses for which a data record is stored in a business database; and

(c) processing one or more data attributes of said data record with at least one business according to a set of authentication rules to determine if said business partner is authentic.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising: notifying said user of the determination made by step (c), and wherein said notifying step and steps (a), (b) and (c) are automatically performed by a computer system either alone or in combination with a user device via a network.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising: providing a standard template for entry of data for said identity of said business partner, wherein a data format of said template is compatible with a computer system that performs steps (a) and (b).

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said standard template is presented to said user for completion.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein said standard template is presented to said business partner for completion.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said authentication rules require one or more current transactions with trade references.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising: if step (b) fails to find a match, presenting a registration template to said business partner for registration in said business database.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising: searching said business database for a credential of said business partner.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said credential is selected from the group consisting of: license, purchase authority, bank account verification, professional memberships and industry memberships.

10. A computer system for authenticating a business partner in response to a request of a user comprising:

means for providing an identity of said business partner;

matching means for matching said identity of said business partner to a business that is one of a plurality of businesses for which a data record is stored in a business database; and

processing means for processing one or more data attributes of said data record with at least one business according to a set of authentication rules to determine if said business partner is authentic.

11. The computer system of claim 10, further comprising: notifying means for notifying said user of the determination made by said processing means.

12. The computer system of claim 10, further comprising: template providing means for providing a standard template for entry of data for said identity of said business partner, wherein a data format of said template is compatible with a data handling capability of said means for proving and said matching means.
13. The computer system of claim 12, wherein said standard template is presented to said user for completion.
14. The computer system of claim 12, wherein said standard template is presented to said business partner for completion.
15. The computer system of claim 10, wherein said authentication rules require one or more current transactions with trade references.
16. The computer system of claim 10, further comprising: if said matching means fails to find a match, presenting a registration template to said business partner for registration in said business database.
17. The computer system of claim 10, further comprising: means for searching said business database for a credential of said business partner.
18. The computer system of claim 10, wherein said credential is selected from the group consisting of: license, purchase authority, bank account verification, professional memberships and industry memberships.